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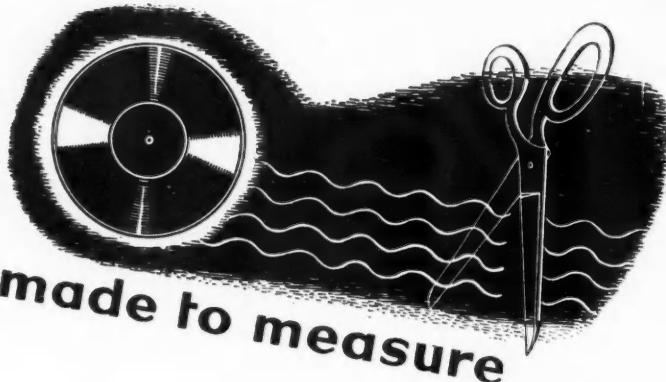


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Maurice Ambler.

"DETECTIVE STORY"

Douglass Montgomery and Michael Balfour in a scene from the London production of
Sidney Kingsley's play.

DRAMA

The Quarterly Theatre Review

NEW SERIES

SUMMER 1950

NUMBER 17

IN AMERICA, the theatre, which people in England often talk of as dying, really is partly dead. Before 1914 there were about eighty theatres open in New York; in 1928 there were forty; to-day about twenty. There is practically no "road," except in cities mostly over the million population mark, where a few permanent theatres survive. The reason for this lamentable state of affairs is that costs, particularly of touring, have gone up so enormously, and for this the unions are mainly responsible. The stage hands' unions and the musicians' unions have not only pushed wages up and up, but their restrictions and requirements are very onerous, especially when a show is moving from one theatre to another. The normal traffic of the theatre is thus in a bad way, and it is impossible to run anything like our repertory companies. The "Little Theatres," of whose development we heard so much in the "twenties," have remained amateur except for two or three. There have been cases where the unions have made an exception. Maurice Evans recently put on a repertory of plays at popular prices at the City Centre in New York, which is really only a big hall. To do this he got certain small concessions from the Unions. I heard later that his *Devil's Disciple* had been bought by a Broadway management and the unions required that, because the set had been built under concession, it must be destroyed and rebuilt. That is the kind of thing which has brought

the American Theatre very nearly to a standstill. The most disquieting result is that the young actor coming out of dramatic school can get no experience. He looks for a job, but there are no jobs except on Broadway, and he is not ready for Broadway. He cannot get the varied experience he would get over here in repertory, so he has to go to the films, or to the radio or television. The idea that America is a land of plenty could not, theatrically, be further from the truth.

One hope of the American theatre to-day (it is only a very small hope as yet) is A.N.T.A., the American National Theatre and Academy. It has a plan, rather on the lines of our Arts Council tours, for getting the theatre to people who have none at present, and providing a much-needed chance for actors. It has a Charter from Congress, but no grant. It lives such life as it can on the proceeds of one show a year, a huge "star" benefit given in a big New York theatre on a Sunday night, called "A.N.T.A. Album." The profession itself has thus provided the funds for some important developments: for instance, A.N.T.A. is re-opening for straight plays the only building still available as a theatre in Washington, so that there will at least be one in the capital city. It has also put two touring companies on the road independent of Broadway. One of them, Margaret Webster's Shakespearean Touring Company, is equipped for going anywhere, whether there is a

theatre or not, with a complete fit-up. In fact the only progress over there is being made with the utmost gallantry by a few individuals with no financial State support, and very little from the commercial managements, who have forgotten the days before the films when the road was a paying proposition.

If there is one thing that makes it obvious that the theatre in America won't die, it is the audiences, who are very much alive indeed. There are certain factors which make theatre-going better in New York than here. The 8.30 curtain enables people to go in a relaxed frame of mind, not straight on top of a day's work as we do. They make more of an occasion of going to the theatre; they are appreciative and readier than we are to respond wholeheartedly to anything new. I was much struck also by the press. It is not only that the papers are bigger and the notices therefore fuller and, it follows, more interesting, but that the theatre is news to an extent we can hardly believe. The papers give the impression that the theatre is really important and worth taking trouble about.

The two biggest successes when I was in New York were both non-commercial plays; an impressive fact, for Broadway is the most commercial place in the world. They were *The Cocktail Party* and *Member of the Wedding*, a sensitive study of character set in the deep South. There were two "Shakespeare" plays running. The chief comic song in the one called *Kiss Me Kate* was "Brush Up Your Shakespeare," and that in fact was what Cole Porter, who wrote the book and music, had done. There were long passages of *The Taming of the Shrew* left in, and Shakespeare won hands down over Mr. Porter. The other, *As You Like It*, was actually the Shakespeare play produced by Michael Benthall with Katherine Hepburn as Rosalind. It was a luscious spectacle with songs and dances from all the comedies in it.

I also saw *Detective Story* which has since reached London. Its melodrama was improbable, but the documentary side was most interesting and well presented. *The Innocents*, an adaptation of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* without quite the full horror of the book, was beautifully set and lit, and indeed the Americans can do wonderful atmospheric lighting with their elaborate equipment.

Practically all the live amateur work is in the College Theatres, which give scope to many of those who have a passionate theatre-interest. There are now 3,000 College Drama Departments in the States, about half of which have their own theatres. They bring plays of artistic quality to an otherwise theatreless public. On a much larger scale, they fulfil the function of our little theatres, but instead of being tiny affairs with slender resources built up by a few individuals, they have well-equipped houses, seating perhaps 300, which the University has built for them, and the funds the University has voted them. The term of study is normally four years, and ex-students often return to play in shows needing older actors. (Even so they have no actors above the age of thirty or so.) These College theatres are a great power, and in the remoter places professional theatre is springing from them. The very powerful Drama Department in Seattle has sponsored a Theatre Company composed of its old students, which has built up a prosperous circuit. The American Educational Theatre Association, recently founded, will undoubtedly afford a most powerful background for A.N.T.A. in its effort to bring the professional theatre back to the whole country.

So there you have the paradox: a theatre which over so much of America is almost dead, and yet has a vividly interested public, growing all the time with the growth of education.

E. MARTIN BROWNE

PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

by Philip Hope-Wallace

FOR a population of ten million, London's supply of forty to fifty theatres is really no better than the more modest four or five theatres in a small, sensibly-proportioned capital like Stockholm or Brussels. But the variety looks impressive, even if any true lover of the theatre would be glad to see some of the fatigued successes of Broadway's yesteryear withdrawn. Not *Streetcar* particularly, which at least this critic considers a play of some value, even if it has been simply a *succès de scandale*; rather plays like Kingsley's *Detective Story*, which I saw start its run on Broadway in 1949 and which reached us here a year later with a much less authentic-seeming cast. This is melodrama set in the bedlam of a New York police station, from which emerges one of those tough-but-tearsodden personal stories of the cop who tries too hard, and by taking the law into his own hands unearths his own wife's ugly past, and ends his life and the play with a gratuitous act of devotion to duty. As played by Ralph Bellamy in New York this was clumsy but quite "strong". Over here it means very much less, but it might run.

Happily there is a British line in detection too. *Murder at the Vicarage* has the cachet of Agatha Christie's name; but one's curiosity (apart from the question of who did the shooting) is solely to see Miss Barbara Mullen slipping out of ingénue roles (which no one of us can play for ever) and making something, if not very much, of a character part. To R. C. Sherriff's specious piece of suburban mystification, *Home at Seven*, Sir Ralph Richardson lends his considerable prestige. He is cast not altogether happily as a bank clerk who distresses his wife (Marian Spencer) by having a twenty-four-hour blackout during which he may or may

not have had something to do with a murder. The writing, though light-fingered, is dull, but it is acted throughout with great competence, and the audience at least feels that the dramatist has played fair with it. So much cannot be said for *Bonaventure*, a new play by Charlotte Hastings which shows Fay Compton as a nun turned 'tec averting a miscarriage of justice; the detective element is amateurish enough, but overlays an interesting play on the question of vocation: should a nun allow her sense of justice to lead her into defiance of Mother Superior? The writing has a theatrical vitality and a sense of values; somehow the play endeared itself, and not merely because it was beautifully acted by Fay Compton and, as the victim of circumstance, by Mary Kerridge. *A Lady Misled* is endearing, too, and has Avice Landone as a twittering spinster with a possible corpse in the larder. Miss Landone is an actress of style and we are always glad to "discover" her, as we do regularly every year or so.

The Way Things Go is so much what you would expect from the pen of Mr. Lonsdale that description is superfluous. The theme is "Woman chases reluctant man" (Glynis Johns and Michael Gough doing the job admirably) while epigrams chase facetiae through a pleasantly smiling void. Somerset Maugham's reputation will not suffer from the adaptation of his book *Theatre* into a play called *Larger than Life*, though it is more suitable material for a one-acter than for a full-length play. The idea is the one about "the theatre's favourite married couple" who are in reality divorced. The American actress Jessie Royce Landis, a sure-hitting technician admirably suited to the part, received an ovation on the first night.

After *Daphne Laureola*, Bridie's new play *Mr. Gillie* may seem smaller beer than we hoped for. But it is all the same a most delightful play, educated, crackling with humour, a little under-written here and there but sustained by some really first-rate acting. The theme is typical of Bridie. Mr. Gillie (Alistair Sim) is a Scots dominie whose geese are all swans. He is for ever "opening the cage" for his pupils, who fly out and are promptly eaten by the cat. Which doesn't discourage Mr. Gillie at all. His most resounding failure is a young pit-boy whom he rears on Carlyle and chess and encourages to marry above his station (the daughter of the local doctor) and to go seek his fortune in London. Six months later the young hopeful (George Cole) returns, having made a quick fortune by the worst sort of film criticism and other spivveries and being as hopelessly down the drain from a moral point of view as he is gorgeously suited from the sartorial. Mr. Gillie sticks to his guns, however, and the tone remains to the end wonderfully light-hearted. It is amusing to speculate what Ibsen would have made of such a theme—or Shaw. Here at least is a play of quality plus wit.

Wynyard Browne's *The Holly and the Ivy* is a distinct advance on his *Dark Summer*. At first it looks like another *Dear Octopus*—a family reunion at the vicarage where one daughter is slave while the other has taken to drink in Fleet Street. But the play opens out into a moving and absorbing study of a family trying to heal itself with the mystique of Christmas cheer and instead bringing out all the skeletons. There is thought and substance here, to say nothing of a truly affectionate study of a family, which reminds us of Priestley in his domestic manner. The production by Frith Banbury is a model of tact, and the flow of the play is a pleasure to watch; the acting honours go to Herbert Lomas, whose portrait of the widowed scholarly vicar enlarges continually in the memory.

All these are down-to-earth plays,

for which "poetic" is a term used only by courtesy, but we have two other plays which earn the title in quite another way. Both are associated with Christopher Fry, though *Ring Round the Moon* is in fact a translation of Anouilh's *L'Invitation au Château*. I regard this production by Peter Brook as altogether superior to the Paris one, and for those prepared to accept a "charade with music" (by Addinsell), it is a magical evening, from which emerge Margaret Rutherford's chair-bound grande dame, Paul Scofield's double role of twin brothers, Mona Washbourne as a silly mama, and Cecil Trouner as a millionaire. A delirious tango in 1915 costume and the prettiest set from Oliver Messel (a winter-garden shelving back into an eau-de-nil sky) linger delightfully in the memory.

Christopher Fry's own play, *Venus Observed*, was commissioned by Sir Laurence Olivier and is played by him with a quiet distinction, and by a good cast containing Heather Stannard (from the Windsor Repertory company), George Relph and Valerie Taylor. One might describe it as a distinguished and very welcome failure. Distinguished by a dancing, glancing verbal felicity and welcome because it brings to a theatre chained to chit-chat the excitement and intoxication of real stage rhetoric (it has incidentally annoyed quite a number of other poets). In the final analysis it is something of a failure because the purely theatrical values are neglected; there is neither suspense nor growth of character, and the idea, even regarded in the most light-hearted way, is not effectively worked out in stage terms. But there is magic all the same: half a dozen critics do not mention *Love's Labour's Lost* in connection with a modern play for nothing.

Of club theatres, an important element in London theatrical life, the Arts Theatre Club remains the best; it has given us a most interesting revival of Ibsen's *Borkman* with Valk and a rather less happy revival of Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife*.



Houston Rogers.

"RING ROUND THE MOON"

Diana (Audrey Fildes) and Frederick (Paul Scofield) in Oliver Messel's magical setting
for Peter Brook's production of the Anouilh-Fry comedy at the Globe.

"THE CELEBRATED PERDITA"



There is in New York a "Kean Club," whose members collect original manuscripts and pictures of theatrical celebrities. One of its members, Mrs. Mary Mason Wharton, owns the document which she kindly allows us to reproduce here. It is in the handwriting of Mrs. Robinson, who was known as "Perdita" after her most famous part. It is headed "Sketch"; is undated; and bears on the back, so as to show when folded, the legend "Sketch of Mrs. ('Perdita') Robinson's Life by Herself." She was born in 1758 and died in 1800.

MRS. MARY ROBINSON, born in the College Green, Bristol. Her father, Mr. Darby, descended from the ancient family of the McDermots in Ireland. Her mother, the great granddaughter of Catherine Seys, one of the daughters and co-heiresses of Richard Seys, Kgt. of Boverton Castle in Glamorganshire, whose sister Anne Seys married Peter Lord Sharp, High Chancellor of Great Britain. Mrs. Darby was also collaterally descended from the immortal

John Locke, the author of the work on the Human Understanding. Mrs. Robinson's Godfather was the Lord Chancellor Worthington.

Mr. Darby lost a considerable fortune in a projected scheme for the advantage of British commerce, and at an early age his only daughter Mary, the subject of this memoir, was removed from the tuition of the Misses More at Bristol, to a seminary of Education in the vicinity of London.

At the age of fifteen she married

Mr. R., then a student in Lincoln's Inn, but her husband having imprudently offended a near relation on whom he depended for a considerable fortune, pecuniary difficulties induced Mrs. R. to make the stage her profession. During two seasons she performed the characters of Lady Macbeth, Juliet, Ophelia, Rosalind, Imogen, Viola, Palmyra, Octavia, Stalina(?) and Perdita, with several others, and in all of which she was honoured with public approbation. It was in the last of these that she attracted the notice of an illustrious character and being peculiarly unfortunate in her matrimonial alliance, after a long series of neglect and unkindness from her husband, and a six months' incessant attention from a Great Personage, she, at his *particular request* quitted both her profession and her husband.

The attachment lasted little more than a year, and Mrs. R. was left to bear the vicissitudes of fortune with an income of only 500 pounds per annum!

She lived chiefly on the continent for nearly five years, and on her return—1788—she commenced her literary labours. The works which she has published bear the following titles:—

Poems in two volumes, octavo.

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Walsingham, or the Pupil of Nature, a novel, 4 vols.

The False Friend, a novel, 4 vols.

The Natural Daughter, a novel, 2 vols. with some other anonymous poems, pamphlets, etc., etc., and has been honoured by the literary tribunals with the title of "The British Sappho."

Mrs. R. enjoys a respectable circle of society, among which some of the first literary characters, male and female, may be named. She has also during near twenty years been honoured with the patronage and friendship of the Duchess of Devonshire. Her poetical works were warmly admired by Sir Joshua Reynolds who twice painted her portrait. A copy of the first picture was requested by the Duke de Chaulne for the Empress of Russia: the original now in the possession of the Marchioness of Hertford, one of Mrs. R.'s liberal Patronesses; the other, which was engraved for her poems, belongs to the Prince of Wales, who has also her full-length portrait by the late Mr. Gainsborough. Her first Edition of Poems, published by subscription, with six hundred of the most illustrious names, both for rank and talents in this country. She has an equally splendid list for a *new edition* in three vols. octavo, shortly forthcoming.

Mrs. R.'s brother is a merchant of the highest respectability at Leghorn. Her father died twelve years since, in Russia, where he commanded a seventy-four-gun ship, was buried with military honours, and lamented as a brave and distinguished officer. His early friend, Admiral Gregg, was chief mourner on this occasion. Mrs. R. has a daughter, highly accomplished, under her own eye, and a proficient in languages, music, etc. She has also written a novel, two vols., *The Shrine of Bertha(?)* now in the second Edition.

Mr. R., still living, and is the only



MRS. ROBINSON

This picture, which we believe has not before been published, is from a painting by Stroehling, engraved by H. Adlard. Both our illustrations are from the Collection of Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson. Mrs. Robinson was painted by Reynolds, Gainsborough and Romney: her portrait by the last-named is in the Wallace Collection, London.

Brother of Commodore William Robinson, the opulent East Indian.

Mrs. R. has nearly completed her own memoirs, in the form of "Anecdotes of distinguished personages and observations on Society and manners during her travels on the Continent and in England." She resided some years at Paris, and in Germany. In the former place she was frequently honoured with the attention of the late Queen of France, who presented her a piece of her own work, through the hands of the late Duc de Biron.

Many of her productions poetical and biographical appear under various signatures in the diurnal, monthly and periodical publications among which

her poems to Lord Moira, Mrs. Pratt, and the memory of Doctor Parkhurst have lately been recognised by the public. She has also completed a Blank Verse Poem in two Books, and a volume of Lyrical Tales, which will shortly be published, and are already highly estimated by a large circle of literary friends.

Mrs. R. has been afflicted with a rheumatic complaint upwards of eleven years, which has baffled the skill of the most eminent of the faculty, and which has been greatly increased by those close attentions to her literary occupations which the smallness of her income and her state of health render absolutely necessary.

SARTRE AND ELIOT

by Robert Speaight

THE publication of these three plays* by J-P. Sartre and of T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*,† afford a basis of comparison between two dramatists who have made a vital contribution to the theatre of our time. Each has given to it a theme and technique. The Sartrian technique may seem to follow a realism, which is already *a la mode*, but this at any rate has been surely learnt and it is placed at the service of a personal, if not a very profound, point of view. Eliot has a less obvious mastery of his method, perhaps because he is unwilling to repeat himself, because he is always searching for a purified style and for a formula more perfectly adapted to his purposes. If one may suggest, broadly speaking, that *Murder in the Cathedral* was a liturgical drama, and *The Family Reunion* a classical drama, each discovering its essential pattern in traditional models, then *The Cocktail Party* may be described as a modern comedy. The setting and psychology are familiar to a contemporary playgoer; the solution is far less familiar and far less acceptable. Nevertheless, there is this primary distinction between Sartre and Eliot, that Eliot can name the malady and prescribe the cure. That life is absurd, that the most heroic people behave in the most inconsequent fashion—there is no novelty in this, although Sartre knows how to make it dramatically plausible and moving. What places *The Cocktail Party* in a category apart is that between the clinking of glasses and banter of conversation we overhear, sometimes in disguised accents and sometimes with

theological clarity, the overtones of traditional wisdom.

All these plays of Sartre have been given in London, and have proved their vitality on the stage. *Crime Passionel*, although here and there it tends to verbosity, is an enthralling study of a bourgeois intellectual (Hugo) turned Communist, whose idealism is at odds with the Party line. He is sent to murder the Chief (Hoederer) who wishes to compromise the purity of of Communist doctrine by entering a coalition with the Conservatives and the Liberals of Illythia; kills him, in the end, out of jealousy, not out of political passion; goes to prison for five years; and comes out to find that Hoederer's policy has been approved by the Soviet Union, and that Hoederer himself has become a national hero. Hugo is no longer even a martyr who had committed the right murder from the wrong motive; he is a blunderer fit for nothing better than the dust-heap. Sartre understands very well the acrid sterility of political man. These humourless and inhuman doctrinaires are depressing company; cut off from the source of being, they exist in a single monotonous dimension. The irony of *Crime Passionel* is brilliantly handled, but here, as elsewhere in the Sartrian theatre, the human condition is absurd not by defection from an Absolute, but is absurd absolutely. The pessimism is literary and light-hearted rather than profound.

Men Without Shadows and *The Respectable Prostitute* are shorter pieces. The

* Three Plays by J-P. Sartre, translated by Kitty Black. Hamish Hamilton 10/6 (*Crime Passionel*, *Men Without Shadows*, *The Respectable Prostitute*).

† *The Cocktail Party* by T. S. Eliot. Faber and Faber 10/6.

first, a study of the French Resistance, exploits the theme of physical suffering beyond the limit of the permissible. The spectacle, or even the suggestion, of torture is nearly impossible to handle on the stage; it is here that convention needs to come to the rescue of realism. Eliot had the same problem to face in the third act of *The Cocktail Party*. Celia Coplestone, formerly the mistress of Edward Chamberlayne, has joined a Nursing Order and been crucified by natives in the African jungle. This terrible but sublime *fate* is related by another character, and his story is the climax of the play. It is important that in one sense Celia's death should seem absurd, that she should appear the victim of a grotesque superstition. Just as the narration of her death comes perilously close on the heels of the chat and banter of the Cocktail Party, so the death itself must seem crude, unnecessary, and ridiculous, serving no apparent end. The situation here is Sartrian, and *The Cocktail Party* has with some reason been described as an Existentialist play. Eliot sees what Sartre sees—but he sees further. Employing the classical method of the Messenger, he spares us the direct impact of Celia's suffering. Nevertheless the description of it proved too much for the Edinburgh audiences, and it has since been modified. But Sartre has always pronounced himself as *anti-classique* and so he has no defence against the violence of his theme. Moreover, since his philosophy is anti-philosophical, he cannot give violence a meaning. These men of the French Resistance, with their woman comrade, are hurt but not broken by torture, and they choose life without dishonour. Nevertheless they die, condemned neither by their own volition nor by the considered judgment of their enemies. They are the victims of a merely malevolent caprice.

Sartre, in short, makes a mockery of the human will, where Eliot restores it to honour. *The Respectable Prostitute*

has the best intentions. She refuses to sign a false statement, affirming that a negro had raped her; this is demanded of her in order to save a Senator's son from prison. But the Senator persuades her out of her refusal, and in the event a negro is lynched. Only, as between two innocent negroes, it is the wrong negro; and in the end we find her coming to a comfortable arrangement with the Senator's son. Sartre is not always happy in mixing satire and realism, and *The Respectable Prostitute*, although it is consistently adroit and entertaining, gives more emphatically than its fellows the impression of a *pièce à thèse*. So does *The Cocktail Party*, but the thesis of Eliot's play is the redemption of fallen nature by the love of God; the purification, not the *paralysie agitans*, of the will. And here is the difference of dimension. But there remains enough in common between Eliot and Sartre for *The Cocktail Party* to be profoundly misunderstood, and therefore appreciated for the wrong reasons. Incomprehension is already busily at work.

We must admit that Eliot has not made the going easy. Wishing to address himself to contemporary man in terms that contemporary man will understand, he has hidden the operation of grace under a play of secular symbols. The confessor is the psychiatrist; the ubiquitous social butterflies flutter the wings of the Guardian Angels and the cassocks of the Universal Church; the sanatorium where Celia prepares for her redemptive journey is the purgative way—the Cocktail Party is *comédie humaine*. All Art is play, and symbols are the poet's playthings. Eliot uses them here to brilliant purpose, but will they, in fact, perform the office of communication? *Murder in the Cathedral* proved its appeal to the quite un-Christian audiences, who were puzzled by the neo-classical symbolism of *The Family Reunion*, and who may well be disconcerted by the shifting planes of *The Cocktail Party*. For *The*

Cocktail Party, though it is easier to listen to than *The Family Reunion*, and more dramatically realised, is not any easier to understand. Its Shaftesbury Avenue surfaces conceal their secrets, and there will always be members of every audience who will imagine they have come to see one play and find that they have come to see another. There is, in fact, an element of conjuring in Eliot's manipulation of his material, and this, like other forms of practical joking, is always liable to give offence.

It has been suggested that the philosophy of the play is pure ethics; that it is more Oriental than Christian; that it is more Lutheran than Catholic; that it preaches salvation by words alone. These misunderstandings are as contradictory as they are unjustified, but they illustrate the risks of symbolism. "I am a Christian," says Eliot to his public. "You, if not professedly Christian, at least know what Christianity is about. You have been formed by it, whether you like it or not. But since the climate of our time, and of our theatre, is so little Christian, we will use symbols instead of sacred words." So far, so fair. We are invited to connive at a fancy-dress dialogue, not to be deceived by it. This is fascinating as Art, but I doubt whether it takes Eliot much farther in commanding St. John of the Cross to the contemporary consciousness of 1950. Yet, for those who are in the know, the Crucifix to which Celia is heroically patterned, throws its dead shadow on the stage. "Order my love aright, oh Thou who lovest me." The prayer of Jacopone da Todi is the purpose of Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, and the need of the quartet whose lives are untuned through love of the wrong thing in the wrong place. Love is the beginning and end of *The Cocktail Party*. The play is not concerned with duty but desire. All

the characters tend, with Celia, towards a "vibration of delight without desire, for desire is fulfilled in the delight of loving." And when Celia describes her sense of sin as a sense of "failure towards someone" and as a "desire to atone," surely it is the myopia of critical blindness to talk of ethics without faith? These people will be justified by the depth and direction of their loving—it is indeed curious that the artist's play of symbols, his measured passage from one level to another, should have concealed the totally Christian dimension of his teaching.

It would be interesting indeed to see how Sartre would re-write *The Cocktail Party*. For Edward Chamberlayne, as for the Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral*, Hell is oneself; for Sartre in *Huis Clos* it is other people. But Sartre has abandoned, where Eliot has recovered, the belief in classical man, with the power of reason and the freedom of choice. For Eliot the purpose of reason is to know one is sick, and the purpose of will is to choose the right doctor. The "patient etherised upon a table" from *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is relevant equally to Edward Chamberlayne, for both men were in the *crise de quarante ans* whose agony Eliot has always known how to translate. Thus Will, being grounded in self-knowledge, is purged of hubris, for it leads to its own abdication. But it gives itself over not to the demons of violence and unreason, which make an inferno of the Sartrean universe, but to the "absolute paternal care" and to those "guardians" qualified to interpret it. This is the meaning of *The Cocktail Party*, and it is odd indeed that intelligent playgoers should miss it. We are in the classical and Christian centre, as far from Neitsche for whom Will was everything as from Sartre for whom it is nothing.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE AMATEUR THEATRE

by John Vickers

THIS article is written, not for the professional photographer who occasionally visits a theatre, nor for the beginner with his first box-camera. I hope to assist those enthusiasts of the Stage who are also familiar with the use of their camera upon other subjects, to bring both interests together. The high standard of the recent Competition shows that many have already achieved an understanding of the first principles of the craft. As in every other department of the Theatre, the Play should be the theme. With co-operation between the actors and the photographer, pictures can be taken which interpret the atmosphere of the play sincerely. Given brilliance on one or both sides of the camera, there is almost no limit to the possibilities.

At first sight, it might appear that technical matters will be one's greatest preoccupation, particularly if one's first attempts have been with unsuitable cameras or materials. This is, however, not so. In fact if one comes to the theatre with these considerations uppermost in one's mind, unsuccess can almost be predicted. I believe it to be essential to see the play at least once before taking the pictures, making notes of the dialogue lines which accompany the particular moment showing promise of good pictures. These "lines" are frequently not those which would have been selected by the actors or producer, whose thoughts more closely follow the text, and some tact may be necessary later, when you quote from your edited list, unless your cast is unusually perceptive. If possible, compress the significant action of the play into notes for five or six pictures only. Be sure to note the best possible camera position and, if you are going to use lighting other than that used in the play itself, add a

word about the place and distance of your lamps. It is easy to forget such details if carried away by later scenes in the play. If even one seeing is not possible, then a thorough study of the "script" is quite essential. Visualise the action of the scenes and do not get hypnotised by exciting words. It is the atmosphere and action alone which you can hope to capture. Press agents and managements will be able to supply appropriate bits of dialogue later.

Try to arrange for a special "photocall," rather than risk the chaos of a combined dress rehearsal and photograph call. It will save time, overall, and increase your chances of getting good pictures. I am, here, of course, not speaking to the 35 mm. snapshot photographer who can, if he wishes, snatch thirty-six pictures at the mercy of accidental conditions, to ensure getting one or two which may be good enough to print. I do not suggest that the 35 mm. camera is unfit for better things . . . on the contrary, it is superb, in practised hands, at ballet in action and other fast moving scenes by artificial light. It can also be taught to take very creditable theatre photographs if it is given a more modest lens than is needed for ballet work. The miniature camera will then be on equal terms, in many respects, with larger cameras, owners of which, I trust, have a sturdy tripod as a normal part of their equipment. Whatever type of camera is used, the tripod is essential, and the results may be then quite difficult to distinguish. Not every camera will do, of course, but so long as it possesses a respectable Anastigmat lens of an aperture between f.8 and f.3.5, has shutter-speeds of $\frac{1}{2}$: $\frac{1}{2}$: and one second (or a "B" for "bulb" setting) and can be loaded with pan-

chromatic films or plates, stage photographs can be taken. If focussing adjustments and the viewfinder are checked for accuracy, close-up groups and even portraits are possible.

On the day of the photo-call, load up with panchromatic film or plates—not the fastest ones made, they're usually a little harsh in tone contrast. Try the second on the list, such as Ilford F.P.3 or Kodak Panatomic X. They give ample "speed" and a more delicate colour and tone rendering. A ten per cent. cut in the recommended development time is a good idea, to reinforce the last characteristic, and for $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch negatives upwards, the Kodak D.76 Developer formula is ideal, though most soft-working formulae are suitable. Under average conditions, the exposure will be between quarter and half second at f.11, though only experience can establish the correct

exposure for the particular circumstances. Even a good exposure meter demands correction in the light of practical tests. In any case, base your exposure upon that needed for the actors' faces, adding general light judiciously from "floats," battens or from your own lighting equipment to relieve any harsh shadows which may be encountered. Be careful to retain the authentic feeling of the scene, in particular, avoiding an over-intense front light as seen in the accompanying illustration (A). This effect is seldom seen either in Nature or the Theatre and whilst revealing defects in the setting, it destroys every bit of the "magic" of the scene. The same lamp, placed to left or right of the actors, well upstage, could easily have made a really exciting picture. Illustration (B) is much better, and taking into consideration the available equipment, its



(A)

"THE ASCENT OF F6"

Produced by the County Grammar School for Boys, Penzance, as described on page 25.

(B)

"THE ASCENT OF FG" at Penzance: Interior.



lighting is much more in keeping with this particular scene. I would have liked, however, to see an attempt at pictorial composition, and action, by regrouping the actors in this picture.

When taking the pictures, hand your notes to the Stage Manager. It is his job to see that actors appear in the right costumes for each scene as it is taken, and he can also give them the "cue-line" for each picture. You will be too busy to do this yourself. With luck, or forewarning, the players will have modified their make-up to suit the camera by softening the "character-lines" and will have been specially careful about wig-joins and so on. They will appear on the stage before you, and from that moment *you* should be in charge. Let each scene be quickly rehearsed before you, and decide on the precise moment for your picture. "Cheat in" the outlying actors somewhat and come as close to them as possible in intimate scenes. Focus and adjust your lamps to suit the group, and when all is as you wish,

get the actors to run again through a line of dialogue, stopping quite still as they reach the pre-arranged moment. Press your shutter-release and it is caught. Watch for a movement on anyone's part, and retake immediately whilst they are still "alive." The actors will quickly get the idea of the technique and good artists *always* act for photographs with every bit of sincerity they have.

If badinage and flippancy are prevalent whilst you are taking pictures of a serious play, you must courageously put it down. Similarly, when you take close-ups or portraits, refuse to work if a foolish semi-circle of self-appointed wits gathers round and embarrasses your subject. They are the people who haven't yet found out what the Theatre is all about. No true theatre-lover would take such liberties during a show. A "photo-call" is a very special show . . . with an audience of two, you and your camera.

When it is all over, and you have the small proofs of your work before

you, "mask in" with strips of card to decide upon the best composition, marking the "cropping" on the proof in ink. Then if you have to send the work away for printing, the trade house can follow your wishes. Prints for display are best if they are at least 8 inches by 6 inches in size, and for this purpose a lustre surface Warmtone paper like Plastica or Bromesko can be most handsome when mounted on thin card. Prints for newspapers or other reproduction should be glossy black-and-white prints 6 by 5 inches or larger.

All good work can be ruined by neglect, and one of the weakest factors in prints made by the amateur is his failure to follow the makers' instructions in the use of printing paper. Prints should be developed for about

two and a half minutes at a temperature of 65 degrees Fahr. A clock and a thermometer are therefore essential. There are many handbooks giving advice on the subject of printing, and most of the general rules are just as sound in stage work as elsewhere.

In conclusion, to reinforce my argument for the special photo-call, I am showing an illustration of a scene from a recent play. In every respect except the identity of the players and their costumes, the photograph differs from that precise moment in the production itself. It could not have been taken otherwise, and yet, though lighting, grouping and gestures all were remodelled as I took it, it seems to me to convey the feeling of that scene more successfully than could have been achieved in any other way.



(c)

A PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN VICKERS OF "THE FATHER"
with Michael Redgrave and Freda Jackson.

LIBRARY OF THE THEATRE

by Mary Garnham

THE British Drama League Library is situated in a square almost adjacent to the open spaces of Regent's Park. In the quiet reference room, among the open-access racks of single copies, in the vast storehouse of playreading and rehearsal sets, work is carried on by a staff of fifteen assistants whereby over 200,000 volumes now penetrate yearly to towns and villages throughout Britain. Probably no library in England serves such a diversity of people. Drama has branched out from the theatre proper to become important in education, in social work, even in industry. This brings to the Library requests from teachers and students in universities, technical colleges, schools, adult education centres, welfare organizations, besides the play-reading and play-producing societies, the little theatres, the repertory companies, the B.B.C., the playwrights, the designers and technicians.

Picture a set of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in its journeys through the year. Spruced and tidy after the August stocktaking, the set is despatched in September to a play-reading group in a Wiltshire village where fortnightly readings are held throughout the winter months; thence to a factory in the Midlands for a read-over prior to production; for a longer session in October to a men's prison in the South of England; in November to a repertory theatre in a Yorkshire coast town. It takes flight in the consular bag to an English reading circle in Prague; back again in December the B.D.L. training department use it for a week-end Course. As it is on the list for some examination, applications follow fast from schools all over the country until April; rather grubby, a page missing

here and there, a copy short (the play is temporarily out of print), the set goes on its rounds in early summer, now to a mental hospital, now to a research station, a Co-operative group, a Y.W.C.A., until the Librarian at last decides that whether replacements are procurable or not, the set is too battered and must be discarded. Its final home may be a boys' club, too short of funds to be able to buy or borrow books, or a hospital for infectious diseases.

During all this time the Librarian's postbag has brought letters—" . . . send another play by return of post, the cast has changed, producer's left, rights are withdrawn . . . a local catastrophe has made our production impossible . . . this time it must be gay, attract the audience, make money, next time we will do something good . . . tomorrow night, what have you (short) on Existentialism? . . . an after-dinner sketch, it must be evening dress . . . the festival this year, something the adjudicator . . . in the printer's hands to-morrow, our programme of readings for the year . . ." By finding books for these and thousands more the Library has grown, moulded as much in the thirty years of its growth by borrowers' needs as by the careful selection of the League's Librarian.

For a good many years now the full extent of the Library's wealth has been hidden from most borrowers. Apart from the little list of sets, no catalogue has been printed since 1930 (supplement, 1934). The new *Player's Library*, just published, is thus of service in showing members the resources they can draw on. A full synopsis of each play could not be given in a book already running to 1,100 pages, but there is a brief description of the type

of every play, the numbers of characters, the period, costume, settings and name of publisher. Thus some of the difficulties of distance have been overcome, now that the little group in a Cornish village, the youth club up in Newcastle, or the busy schoolmaster in the London suburb can read at their leisure the names of most of the greater and lesser plays that have been written through the centuries.

Among the Library's more hidden reserves are records and card indices of articles and illustrations appearing in the files of periodicals, both English and foreign, from which readers can discover information on some phases of theatrical art not yet recorded in books. There are scrap-books of press cuttings, bound collections of programmes, photographs of amateur and professional productions, and an increasing number of plays in foreign languages. The William Archer collection, the library of the great scholar-critic who died in 1924, also does not appear in the printed catalogue but is available for readers in the Reference Room, which also has on loan some of the valuable prompt copies and critical books that belonged to Sir Nigel Playfair, and some volumes from the personal library of Mr. E. Gordon Craig. Other adjuncts, such as plates of costume designs, musical scores, catalogues and guide books of museums and other libraries, enable the staff to solve some unusual problems: "What play does Oyster Puff come in?—No, not a quiz, my daughter's homework . . . a discovery I've made! The first lines in Shakespeare's Sonnets, B-O-D-L-E-Y. Where shall I send it? . . . My company must learn to speak American before next week, *what do you know!* . . . I want a picture of Julia Neilson's cloak, my wife embroidered it in 1910, yes, it was in *The Popinjay*, I think . . ."

The Library is open daily from 10 to 5 (Saturday till 12.30), and on

Wednesday evenings it remains open until 9 o'clock. For those who can visit the Library borrowing is simple and quick, as all the facilities are at hand. The borrower can choose his books, arrange his programme of sets for readings and productions or seek advice on any of his problems. For the country members, the Library staff endeavours to minimize delay by a speedy response to letters. And here borrowers could help by sending their requests, not enclosed in parcels, but in separate letters addressed to the Librarian, stating the full name of their membership. For on some mornings when the dozen or so mail-bags are emptied in the Packing Room, from a parcel held together precariously by a piece of string are seen to fall sixpences and shillings and perhaps a scrap of paper—"Next reading Tuesday night, send another play similar to this, remaining copies following later." Unsigned. Although library assistants may be good amateur detectives such borrowers are fortunate when their money is correctly credited, the right play chosen and despatched in time, and no copies lost in the post.

Borrowers may not be aware of the very great inconvenience and possibly even financial loss that they may cause to other members by retaining sets of plays beyond the allotted time. Many societies plan their readings and productions six to twelve months ahead, and a carefully chosen programme may be wrecked should their set of plays not arrive in time. Telegram and trunk call may save the day, but out of print plays or American publications cannot be bought at a moment's notice.

The Librarian sometimes sighs for the days when calf-bound volumes were chained in dim cathedral libraries. Then she remembers, Belfast must have *The Family Honour* by Tuesday, Kilmarnock, *Huis Clos* by Thursday, and Oxford, *The Cocktail Party* before the week-end.

NEWS AND VIEWS

OUR PRESIDENT, Viscount Esher, has been elected a member of the Executive Committee of the British Council, of whose Drama Advisory Committee he is Chairman. He is Chairman also of the Governors of the Old Vic, and a member of the Arts Council. The new President of the S.C.D.A. is Mr. James Bridie: we offer to him and to the Association our felicitations and good wishes. Another notable appointment is that of Mrs. Christabel Burniston, formerly one of Lancashire's County Drama Advisers, to be Principal Examiner to the Poetry Lovers' Fellowship in succession to the late Dame Irene Vanburgh.

UNIVERSITY ACTING can show rare qualities when wisely directed and sufficiently rehearsed—London's University College gave the first Metropolitan showing of Christopher Fry's "The Firstborn," with commendable drive and sincerity. Neither of the older Universities equalled this last term. Cambridge's Mummers showed lively production but very poor acting in their coming-of-age "Hassan," and the "Oedipus in Colonus" produced with loving care by the Provost of King's had many wooden performances. The O.U.D.S. "Othello" is thus assessed for us:

If we were to accept Othello's remarks about himself as the truth—that he is rude in his speech, and "little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace"—it would be more credible that he should be made "a gull, a dolt," by Iago. But Shakespeare has put into his mouth a music so formal and elaborate that the image of the simple martial Moor fades at its sound. Actually it is only in reading that such considerations trouble us, so skilfully has Shakespeare displayed the workings of Iago's poison. But it is doubtless with this difficulty in mind that Mr. John Godwin, who plays Othello in the O.U.D.S.

production, has sought to give the hint of weakness at the opening, which Shakespeare put into the text of "Lear" but not into this play. This Othello trembles at the lips and gives other signs of a precariously achieved control, and his bearing is more humble than soldierly. The danger of such an approach is that unless the actor has great gifts of poetry and nobility of mien, the full force of the later degradation will be lost. And degradation of beauty into ugliness it must be. Coleridge thought that Othello killed Desdemona not in jealousy but out of a just conviction (given his belief in Iago): *ecrasez l'infame* in fact; but if Shakespeare had meant this, he would not have shown its effects on Othello as so repulsive. Mr. Godwin has not the gifts to show this contrast, and his Othello, though carefully thought out, has a risky touch of senility about him. An honest Iago is plausibly played by Mr. Guy Brenton, who does not, however, give quite the necessary sting of malice to the "suckle fools" which cuts so startlingly across the calm of Desdemona's sea passage; nor, I think, should Iago waver at her final prayer to him. Desdemona (Miss Josee Richard) gave a beautiful performance, but Emilia was a weak spot in the production, with an unlucky propensity towards raising laughs. The groupings and settings were effective, but it would have been better if the steps which divided the stage into an upper and a lower part had been a third less high: as it was, one felt a sympathetic weariness on behalf of those who were so constantly climbing them, as for Victorian servants, and scenes played at the top were uncomfortably remote.

ANNE RIDLER

SCHOOLS ARE CHOOSING ENTERPRISINGLY, to judge from the reports of recent productions. *The Perse School at Cambridge did "A Comedy of Errors"*

What an excellent choice for a boys' school! The two Dromios, convincingly alike, kept the comedy going with ease; the Antipholuses were cleverly played; there was a dignified Solinus and a moving Aegeon. Among the "ladies" was a particularly charming Luciana. Ensemble work was excellent, especially in the Interlude of the strolling players. The show reflected great credit on its producers, Messrs. Tanfield and Cronal.

FLORENCE RODEN

At Penzance, a modern verse-play was given:

School Dramatic Societies have certain facilities for the production of experimental types of drama. The box-office returns need only pay their expenses; they usually enjoy a ready-made, appreciative audience of parents and friends; and they can easily assemble a large cast. Both the Girls' and the Boys' County Grammar Schools at Penzance have this year staged plays that otherwise might never have been seen in this part of Cornwall. The girls played *The Trojan Women* of Euripides in the picturesque Minack Theatre on the cliffs of Porthcurno during July; and the boys have just completed a successful presentation of *The Ascent of F6*, by Auden and Isherwood.

What a wealth of fine dramatic material this latter play comprises! The mountaineering sequences provide plenty of action, and the character parts of the political and social satire are within the scope of young amateurs. Opportunities for verse speaking and choral verse speaking are afforded and all the interstices of the play are filled with thought and poetry. Those who enjoy work behind the scenes have full scope: rocks have to be built, a wind

machine made, and many lighting effects planned; while what boy does not delight to join in making the noise of an avalanche? The performance was given with zest, and made a deep impression upon its audiences. By such productions as these, schools can contribute something of real value to the cultural life of their neighbourhood. A.A.W.

Kingsbury County School did "Ralph Roister Doister" which the Headmaster of Eton wrote in 1562:

The cast approached it with mixed feelings, some liking at once the humour of the theme and the simplicity of character and action, others dubious about an old play in rhymed verse. As rehearsals went on they liked it more and more; they played it with plenty of spirit and three audiences of all ages were amused. The choice was amply justified. W. J. B. ROBINSON

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL, and supplies the impetus for constant new ventures in the progressive theatre:

"Young Theatre" was founded in May 1948 as an attempt to give new blood a chance to express itself—hence our title. Though vagrant in the West Riding we draw most of our members from the Bradford area.

Our first director of production was Mr. Tony Richardson, who has just been elected President of the O.U.D.S. The first show was a double-bill consisting of Milton's *Comus* and Tchekov's *The Proposal*, in which as always we made our own costumes and decor. In the summer of 1948 we put on our first Shakespeare—*Romeo and Juliet*; over Christmas we put on another double bill—Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, heavily cut and re-interpreted in modern dress, with Thornton Wilder's *The Happy Journey*. A festival of one-act plays, of which Shaw's *Village Wooing* was the most successful, was held in June, 1949, followed by *Two Gentlemen of*

Verona. To celebrate our second anniversary we are putting on Fletcher's masque, *The Faithful Shepherdess*. The production has been designed after the work of Botticelli and the early Florentines. After this Ibsen's *Doll's House* and Molière's *Georges Dandin* are scheduled for the summer.

WILLIAM GASKILL

*THE FESTIVAL IS LOOKED AT
from a new angle by our Leeds organiser:*

I have contacted in one way or another most of the fifty societies in my city. It has been a struggle to get the four entries required for a Stage One Festival, and I thought that perhaps you might like to have a summary of reasons for NOT entering.

1. Fear of loss of support from their own "lay" public, if the particular society does not fare too well at the hands of the adjudicator.

2. Feeling that they are not good enough.

3. Interference with their regular programme, by preparation of Festival show.

Reason No. 1 is by far the most common and the most difficult to deal with. Up to the time when I took over, not a single entry had come in from a city society in the West Riding. Such societies put on good shows at great cost and it is essential that they have the support of the "lay" public in order to make financial ends meet. What I mean by "lay" public is that proportion of the audience (possibly 80 per cent.) which attends for its own entertainment and to get its money's worth.

Now the fear is that those who come to a Festival may as usual consider the show to have been "jolly good" and up to the usual standard of the X Society, until the adjudicator gets busy with his criticisms. His comments will probably be above the heads of these people, who will only gain from him the impression that after all the show was not as good as they thought. As a con-

sequence, they may not be so anxious to pay a fairly high price to attend future presentations. Apart from this, in a large town there may be two leading societies, say X and Y. Should X secure a higher place in the Festival than Y, then Y may lose some of its supporters to X.

I find these objections unanswerable because they are true. To try to get over them I would suggest:

(a) The adjudication should be private and confidential as between the adjudicator, the B.D.L., and the individual society;

(b) The fact of whether a society has opted to proceed to the next stage should likewise be treated confidentially.

My answer to the second reason against entry has been to point out how much a society can learn by taking part. I pointed out that the society that does not enter is rather like a man who never attempts an examination and so never fails.

No. 3, I regarded as more excuse than reason. If the society is keen to enter, it will take this extra show in its stride and not allow it to detract from its ordinary productions.

HAROLD HUDSON

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Plans for the first International Festival to be organised by the League are going ahead, and companies from Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France are expected to appear at the Scala Theatre, London, on Tuesday, June 13th, where they will be joined by an English company from the National Festival Final on the preceding evening. The event will be non-competitive, but will afford both audience and players the unique opportunity to compare the work, standards and achievements of amateurs throughout Europe. Each company will play in its own language, and there will be a commentary by Tyrone Guthrie, who will also adjudicate the evening before. E.J.C.

SECOND PRIZE PHOTOGRAPH

in our Competition: the Ashley Players (Walton-on-Thames) in "Gaslight".



S. D. Beaumont

B.D.L. FULL-TIME COURSE

The fourth Full Time Course was concluded on March 24th. Twenty-four students attended from all parts of England and also from New Zealand, South Africa, Bombay and Tsientsin. A grant from the Ministry of Education to the Training Department made it possible to increase the lecturing staff, and the alterations and additions to the premises were a very great asset to the success of the Course. Lecturers included Michel Saint-Denis, Michael Redgrave, Hugh Hunt, Norman Marshall, Harold Hobson, E. Martin Browne, Muriel Byrne and Mordecai Gorelik. B.D.L. "starred" certificates were awarded to Ebrahim Alkazi, Dorothy Dickinson and Ruth Winter. Of the twenty students sitting for the first examination of the newly formed Drama Board, eight were successful.

PERMISSION TO PERFORM. A few points from recent correspondence are worth noting:

It is wise to obtain a licence to perform your chosen play before starting rehearsals. A play is not always available in all areas, even when released for Repertory or Amateur performance. We urge publishers to make this clear in the printed text of each play. And we remind intending producers that early application prevents the possibility of disappointment.

PRIVILEGE OF MEMBERSHIP, No. 3:

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ARENA THEATRE

SINCE the Americans began seating audiences in circles and semi-circles around stages whose contours rang changes on all the shapes known to geometry, a wave of malaise has been running through theatres, amateur and professional, which esteem the title of progressive. Typical of the apostles of the new cult is bearded John English of the Highbury Little Theatre, Sutton Coldfield, who tours the country with his fit-up Arena Theatre, preaching the decadence of the picture stage and salvation through Arena. Abhorring the word "proscenium," he claims that his new theatre "combines the techniques of stage, film and radio."

Just what is this embodiment of technical trinity, this theatre which is to herald, we are told, a new dramatic epoch? Its stage is semi-circular, likewise the arrangement of its seats which rise tier upon tier to ensure excellent visibility from any part of the theatre. There is a curtain running on a semi-circular traverse, but otherwise the general effect is mainly Elizabethan, except in the seating of two thirds of the audience in what would be the wings.

The Highbury company are very talented, but even they do not seem to have mastered the technique of acting with their backs, a portion of the actor's anatomy hitherto considered undramatic, but much in evidence at Arena performances. Grouping, the source of so much beauty and significance on the normal stage, is at a discount in the Arena, where every spectator sees the stage from a different angle. Audibility is alternately better and worse than on the proscenium stage—better when the actor is facing you, worse when he is not. The audience in the front row (the dearest seats) can reach out and touch the actor and this is held to approximate to the

cinematic close-up. It does not.

Claiming novelty on the one hand, the Arena theatre is equally anxious to include in its lineage the Greek and Elizabethan theatres, peak periods in dramatic history. The argument is that if you reproduce the theatres of drama's Golden Age, the masterpieces will follow; breathlessly Arena theatre awaits the advent of its Aeschylus or Shakespeare, the master-spirit strangled by proscenium and awaiting only liberation by Arena to kindle the sparks of genius. Results to date are negative.

But a visit to the Arena is definitely thought-provoking to the theatre lover if not to the general public. Challenging as it does most established dramatic conventions, it enables us to re-value and appreciate them better. The best defence of the proscenium stage is a performance in an Arena theatre, where one sees the downstage gesture and the un-significant grouping, the incessant re-positioning and the inexpressive posterior in all their ugliness. The fundamental weakness of this type of stage is the producer's abdication of his right and duty to regulate the audience's visual angle, to show only what he would have them see and conceal what is best hidden.

All honour to these seekers for the stage of the future for a venture that was very well worth undertaking and in its present form is even more worth abandoning. The stage of to-morrow may have none of the things to which we are accustomed, but we may be sure that it will have at least an audience and actors, and that the former will want to see and hear the latter. The Arena is a laudable attempt to improve both vision and hearing, but the cost to significance is too great and the search must go on.

GORDON MILLINGTON

the pros and cons

THE professional company formed by the Intimate Theatre Development Group to play in an Arena Theatre has been at work for nearly twelve months. It was formed to try out in practice some of the current theorising on the need for a change in theatre form. It began by making a survey of the position of the living theatre and the needs of its authors, actors, audiences, artists and technicians. Special attention was given to the influence of the new and robust partners in dramatic entertainment, the Cinema and the Radio. An attempt was made to be clear-headed about what was left for the living theatre to do. The Group came to the conclusion reached by many other practising theatre-people that the time was opportune for some fairly fundamental change in theatre form, and it was decided to set up an experimental unit in which a number of conflicting theories could be tested, and thus to collect information as a basis for a further review.

The design of the first experimental theatre provided for a playing space or stage roughly circular in shape and at floor level. The audience was grouped round it on three sides, the fourth side being used to enable the use of theatrical setting and to provide a tangible link with the orthodox theatre of our own day. The audience was raised in tiers to ensure visibility and no member of the audience was placed more than 40 feet from the actor. A theatre produced on this plan is almost exactly the same shape as the classical Greek theatre, though very much smaller in size. The size and the degree of embracement of the actor by the audience compares very closely with what we know of the Elizabethan Playhouse. These similarities are interesting, but certainly nothing more than coincidence.

It is significant that the Arena Theatre has been accepted in this country without comment by hundreds of thousands of theatregoers as a valid method of performing a very wide range of plays. In the Arena Theatre the author, the actor and the audience come into their own, the producer and the designers certainly no longer dominate. It makes great demands on the actor as it requires complete integrity, sincerity, impeccable diction and movement. In spite of the intimacy, it needs enormously increased power of projection, but all these things, though exacting, are to an actor, opportunity.

Perhaps the strongest criticism of Arena presentation is that it destroys the selective viewpoint. The proscenium stage has power to concentrate and focus the visual attention by means which are not available in the Arena. I do not believe that the problem is insoluble. In some plays, e.g., *Our Town* and *Antigone*, it does not even arise. Arena presentation has proved enormously successful with children, and its performances engender a higher degree of concentration than when similar plays are performed in the proscenium.

Lighting remains the biggest technical problem. There is no difficulty in providing adequate light, the problem is to do on the Arena Stage in three planes what we do on the proscenium stage in two.

We are grateful to Mr. Millington for his comment in the adjoining article.

I believe there is evidence that we are working on the right lines. With another year's work we should have enough information and experience to reconsider the theory and perhaps to plan a new theatre.

In the meantime I think we may be quietly and, I hope, unostentatiously, affecting a bloodless revolution in our method of enjoying live theatre performances.

JOHN ENGLISH

THEATRE BOOKSHELF

WORLD DRAMA

"*World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh*," by Allardyce Nicoll. Harrap, 30s.

"I have taken all knowledge of the theatre to be my province." With this modification Professor Nicoll might repeat Bacon's famous dictum. His survey of *World Drama* does not belie its title, either in respect of time or place. It ranges from Aeschylus in the sixth century B.C., to the present day, and from Japan to the western shores of U.S.A., taking in its stride the Nô plays and the Chinese and Sanskrit dramas. By its sheer comprehensiveness the volume lays all students of the theatre under a special debt. The demands of modern scholarship are so insistent and rigorous that editors and stage historians, with very few exceptions, find themselves confined to a limited area of the theatrical field—a single country or period or even author. Hence it is an exhilarating experience to be transported into the "ampler æther" of this cosmic survey with its revaluation of even august reputations by the very highest standards.

In dealing with the leading dramatists Professor Nicoll gives an analysis of their work as a whole, usually devoting special attention to one or more of their plays, with illustrative quotations from the dialogue in English translations. But the value of his survey to many students will not lie only in his treatment of outstanding dramatic phases or figures but of minor movements and obscure playwrights. And what a work on this scale brings out with remarkable clearness is how the creative spirit of drama shifts, at different times, often unaccountably, from one country to another, and gradually exhausts itself.

Nor is Professor Nicoll concerned with drama only from a literary standpoint. At the head of each section of his record he lays stress on factors that have

to be taken into account. There is the environment in which the performance takes place which he traces in its multiplicity of forms from the open-air earliest Greek theatre to to-day's closed structure with its picture-stage. There is the variation in the number and functions of the performers. And, what is less obvious, the influence of the changing character of the audience, aristocratic, bourgeois, or popular, for which the playwright has to cater.

In the case of a volume extending, with its index, to exactly 1,000 pages it has seemed advisable within the limits of a review in DRAMA to indicate, as above, its general scope and impact. A few details across the centuries may be picked out in illustration. The record of Greek drama, both tragedy and "old comedy" makes an admirable introduction, and the comparison of Aeschylus with Marlowe, Sophocles with Shakespeare, and Euripides with Shaw, if not pressed too far, is very suggestive. On the "new comedy" in Rome, Professor Nicoll distinguishes between Plautus who "wrote to please the crowd" and Terence who "sought the esteem of the intelligentsia." Among the medieval religious plays he draws special attention to the often neglected Anglo-Norman *Adam*. During the Renaissance period he traces the beginning of regular comedy with Ariosto and Machiavelli in Italy: the impulse to tragedy given by Marlowe, whose *Tamburlaine* "is not a great play, but it was an inspiration," and the brilliant contribution to drama by Lope de Vega and Calderon in Spain, only second to that in Elizabethan England. In the early seventeenth century, Professor Nicoll explains in detail the issues raised in France by Corneille's *Le Cid* and the eventual triumph of classicism at its highest in Racine and Molière. As to the German theatre in the eighteenth century he would have

no sympathy with the recent attempts to deprecate Schiller, whose *Wallenstein* trilogy he ranks as "one of the greatest achievements of the stage." How far Professor Nicoll himself will find sympathy in his assessment of modern Scandinavian drama, in placing Strindberg higher than Ibsen, is a moot question. On the dramatic movements in their respective countries, with which he specially associates Chekhov, Pirandello, Eugene O'Neill, J. M. Barrie, T. S. Eliot, Synge and Sean O'Casey, I must refer readers to the book itself for illumination.

There are a few slips, for correction in a second edition. The so-called Coventry religious plays do not belong to that city: *Fulgens and Lucres* is not anonymous but by Henry Medwall; Marlowe's college at Cambridge was Corpus Christi, not St. John's. And why do so few of the attractive illustrations with which the book is so lavishly provided face their relevant subjects?

FREDERICK S. BOAS

STANISLAVSKY

"Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage."
Trans. David Magarshack. Faber 25s. net.

The end of any significant artist's career brings inevitably some form of studio-sweeping in which the sketch and the torso, the unfinished portrait and the forgotten manuscript, come into review or find their market. Some of them may be outmoded fragments or trifles and others have the stuff of masterpieces, but there is generally a kinship between them that makes them recognisable for what they are. Their association with one man and his creative workshop is the principal thing, and it is seldom they can add very much of importance to existing knowledge of him and his work.

It may not be unfair to say that the studio-sweeping of Stanislavsky as theatre man has been as thorough as that of any painter or sculptor in this century or last, and is now beginning to yield as large a crop of repetitions. The comparison is permiss-

sible because he was himself so positively a studio man working by constant experiment and having about him his jottings and lecture notes; and also because, like great painters of his own time or a little earlier, he embodied the conception of naturalism as an art form. All who remember the controversies at the turn of the century, about the stage as much as about painting or sculpture or music, will know that this conception was far from winning easy acceptance. Many artists and critics in revolt against the output of commonplace maintained that naturalism, realism and photography were all one and the same.

But Stanislavsky with Chekhov's genius to help him (even though he would never quite regard the dramatist as his inspiration) proved them wrong in his own medium of the theatre. To-day's dramatist, aware that naturalism can be an art form, can nevertheless well despair of writing anything to compare with its masterpieces in *The Cherry Orchard* or *Uncle Vanya*, which received their original mould of form from this producing artist.

In this book some of the repetitions inseparable from studio-sweeping remain; but they are rather more noticeable in Mr. David Magarshack's own introduction than in his translation which seems to grow in ability and liveliness as it proceeds. And it would have been easy, after this lapse of time and the acceptance of so many principles once disputed, for the exposition of the famous "system" to grow dull. It remains readable and well, though too sparsely, illustrated.

ASHLEY DUKES

THE NEW DUNCAN

"Stratton," by Ronald Duncan. Faber and Faber, 9s. 6d.

Two leitmotifs for Mr. Duncan's play come to mind: one is the old riddle "Brothers and sisters have I none, but this man's father was my father's son," and the other, Lear's cry, "See how

yon Justice rails upon you simple thief. Change places, and handy-dandy, which is the Justice, which is the thief?" Father and son at the end of a long family line are so bound together that neither can tell which is the image, which the reflection: son loves mother, father loves daughter-in-law. The father as Judge condemns a man for committing a crime which he himself has already committed in some dream of the future, and is to commit at the end of the play; his wife is smitten by hysterical blindness because she cannot bear to see him as he really is, and yet her insight through her blindness is only the more unbearable to him. Father murders son, and discovers that in doing so he has killed himself; husband murders wife, because he cannot face the pain of redemption through her love. At the opening, we have the scene set for a tragedy after a Greek model—the hero at the height of power and success, his praises sung in so exaggerated a way as to tempt the gods, he himself displaying a hubris of rectitude and tolerance; at the end, we see the ruin of a distinguished house.

What then prevent us from feeling at the close that we have witnessed a tragedy? It is partly perhaps that the fatality which alone can be felt responsible for the fall, is too mechanical and arbitrary, not, as was Greek fatalism, part of the very nature of the universe. (We are shown a mime at the opening of Stratton's final crime, and only so could we be persuaded to feel its inevitability—if indeed we do.) Then also the motives are too involved and kaleidoscopic for us to be able to feel that they really belong to the characters. And lastly the poetry, on which depends so much in a theme of this kind, is often somewhat ragged, and does not often reach the quality of *This Way to the Tomb*. It may be that the stricter forms which he used in that play suit his talent better; certainly there is more in Stratton of dialogue, which is not his strong point. But there are

moving speeches, and some of those concrete images of his which are so effective for the stage: "As we sit with memory as a rosary" or "Till the linnet of our spirit's broken." It is possible that, since Mr. Duncan's sense of the stage is so good, one will be able to accept motives and situations when one sees the play in the theatre, which seem forced and unreal in reading.

ANNE RIDLER

PLAYS AND THE PANTOMIME

"The Complete Plays of Henry James,"
Edited by Leon Edel. Hart-Davis. 35s.

"The Heiress," by Ruth and Augustus
Goetz. Reinhardt and Evans. 7s. 6d.

"Plays of the Year." Chosen by J. C.
Trewin. Paul Elek. 12s. 6d.

"The Importance of Being Earnest," by
Oscar Wilde. Heinemann. 2s. 6d.

"Noah," by Andre Obey. Heinemann.
2s. 6d.

"The Story of Pantomime," by A. E.
Wilson. Home and Val Thal. 8s. 6d.

The *Complete Plays of Henry James* make an impressive volume, although the novelist only finished twelve plays in all. They are edited by Leon Edel, who, in his introductory essay and the separate prefaces, frequently manages to be considerably more stimulating than the plays themselves. The theatre was an obsession with James, but on reading his dramatic work it is surprising that the fastidious author thought so highly of his efforts. "Is it conceivable that the play satisfied the author of the novel?" asks a critic of "*The American*," and no one could wonder at the question. It is even, perhaps, a little surprising that some of the plays achieved performance, especially as they were written during a period when outstandingly good plays were by no means unknown. Possibly *The High Bid* is the best, although the ill-fated *Guy Domville* has fine moments (Mr. Edel's account of the tragic first night at the St. James's is masterly), but in the main the book is a monument

to the failure of a genius to recognise his own limitations.

However, if the actual plays of Henry James were unfortunate, adaptations from his novels have been surprisingly successful. *Berkeley Square* will be remembered, and at the moment of writing, *The Innocents* (from *The Turn of the Screw*) is being presented in New York, while *The Heiress*, at the Haymarket has had a long run. The well-illustrated printed version shows what a sensitive play Mr. and Mrs. Goetz have wrested from the story *Washington Square*. It is a play of character studies; the mordant, dominating doctor, the worthless, charming young man, and the tragic love-starved girl's embittered refusal of partial happiness makes an arresting ending which playgoers of to-day are more likely to appreciate than those for whom James wrote. As Sir Ralph Richardson suggests in his foreword, it is to be hoped that the shade of Henry James can see the "House Full" notices at the very theatre where Wilde's success once caused him so much discouragement.

Each reader is bound to have his preferences among the six plays chosen by J. C. Trewin for *Plays of the Year*, 1948-49. "Cockpit," the first in the book, is in a class by itself, but after this the present writer would be inclined to put the gripping, "well-made" play, "The Paragon" first, and the oddly uncomfortable biblical study, "Family Portrait," last—and least. Between these we have the genuinely funny farce "The Happiest Days of Your Life," Miles Malleson's untrammelled adaptation from Molière, "The Miser," and the excessively French "Don't Listen, Ladies!" Obviously the book has something for all tastes.

The first two volumes of Messrs. Heinemann's "Drama Library" promise well for this new series. Both should be useful: *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with an illuminating introduction of John Gielgud, who will know,



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verse-plays

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if anyone, how this masterpiece should be treated, and Obey's *Noah*, with an introduction by Michel Saint-Denis, tracing the history of the play and the founding of the Compagnie des Quinze. The books are attractive, firm and easy to handle, and, most remarkable of all, issued at a reasonable price.

"But really, can you imagine anyone not liking a pantomime?" enquires A. E. Wilson at the beginning of his book *The Story of Pantomime*, and, firmly convinced that the attractions of pantomime are beyond criticism, he proceeds to give us, from his great store of knowledge, a wealth of detail, historical and modern, which is as fascinating as it is amusing—the only dull passages being the miraculously unfunny extracts from opening scenes and comedian's patter of long ago. Mr. Wilson regards the violent intrusion of the music hall leniently (although it took away his beloved Harlequinade), and older theatregoers will share his enthusiasm for Dan Leno. But despite remarkable personalities, this intrusion added debatable features from which pantomime has only just begun to recover.

F. SLADEN-SMITH

VERSE-PLAYS SPANISH AND ENGLISH

"*The Star of Seville*," attributed to Lope de Vega, and "*The Lovers of Teruel*," by Juan Eugenie Hartzenbusch, both translated from the Spanish by Henry Thomas. Cumberlege, 7s. 6d. each.

"*Venus Observed*," by Christopher Fry. Cumberlege, 6s.

"*Henry Bly and other plays*," by Anne Ridler. Faber and Faber, 10s. 6d.

The two Spanish tragedies, one of the seventeenth and one of the nineteenth century, may serve to remind English students and writers of poetic drama of a truth that stands out more plainly in Spain than in the England of the Elizabethans, where its edge

is somewhat blunted by familiarity. A conflict of passion between rival loves is not sufficient to make a tragedy, until some issue of duty or honour enter. A taboo from an alien code, like the Spanish code of honour, retains its dramatic force even in translation into another language and context. A tragedy could be made for the English stage out of love and the colour-bar, or love and caste, but not out of tension between a blonde and a brunette. ("How happy I could be with either . . ."). It would be unfair to Christopher Fry to suggest that all the conflicts in *Venus Observed* are of the latter order, but the weakness of his play is that while the conflicting temperaments of the Duke's three mistresses and the American-bred daughter of his urbane and unscrupulous agent are excellently observed, it is quite impossible to believe that the agent is in any real danger from the Duke's displeasure; so that the dubious expedient adopted by his self-righteous son to deliver his family from peril is doubly unconvincing. Over this very thin scaffold Mr. Fry throws a gossamer curtain of words, words, beautiful words, but they don't add up into a dramatic poem. Mrs. Ridler's three moralities are much more solidly built. Her verse is so right and taut on the line that runs from *Sweeney Agonistes* to *The Cocktail Party* that it is easy to miss the element in her thought of love and salvation that does not derive from T. S. Eliot. Of these three plays *The Mask* is short, has a small cast, was written for broadcasting and is eminently suitable for amateur production. *Henry Bly*, which is full of humanity and humour, has the weaknesses of a fairy tale from the point of view of verisimilitude. It would be better with an improvised stage. The third play was intended to be performed in a church. I am not sure that it would be convincing anywhere else, or that anyone could persuade the vicar to take the risk.

GEORGE EVERY, S.S.M.

LYRIC NOTE

"*Songs and Lyrics from the English Masques and Light Operas*," edited by F. S. Boas. Harrap. 8s. 6d.

Sufferers from *Angst* should read this book; depressions surrender to the beguiling grace and zest of our ancestors' "vocal numbers," which also constitute a tiny, enchanting history of national taste. The Jacobean nymphs and nightingales, superbly crowned by the exquisite Jonson and melodious Milton, give way to the urban charms of Gay and his successors, when gallants become beaux, and roast beef, jolly millers and British tars emerge, to yield to the sentimentalities and knowing humour of the Victorians, and culminate in the sneers and snobberies of the Savoyards. Nostalgia for the nymphs and nightingales prevails. Dr. Boas prefixes a delightful account of the development of the masque and light opera. All we miss is the tunes.

MARJORY THOMPSON

PRACTICE AND THEORY

"*Rip Van Winkle*": *The Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson*. Reinhardt & Evans Ltd., 18s.

"*The Dark Voyage and the Golden Mean. A Philosophy of Comedy*," by Albert Cook. Harvard University Press, \$3.50. London, Cumberlege, 20s.

Readers susceptible to the fascination of theatrical memoirs will feel grateful to Messrs. Reinhardt and Evans for including Jefferson's sixty-year-old *Autobiography* in their attractive Theatre Library. Descendant of a theatrical family, Jefferson was evidently a born actor; but he worked, untiringly, to become a good one also. His early vicissitudes of actual "barnstorming" in the South, his professional encounters with Edwin Booth, gloomy Macready and fiery Edwin Forrest, and his eventual emergence as a "star,"

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Bedford St., London, W.C.2

all are here recorded with simplicity and humour. Characteristically, when Jefferson decided to play Rip Van Winkle he acquired his wigs and costumes before even finding a satisfactory dramatic version of the story. In 1865, at the London Adelphi, the play was nearly withdrawn at the last moment because Benjamin Webster, the lessee, and Dion Boucicault, the adaptor, were on bad terms. But its eventual success gave Jefferson a *cheval de bataille* for nearly forty years; his performance became an American institution. The book leaves the impression of a modest and loveable character.

The significance of the title, *The Dark Voyage and the Golden Mean*, is not made clear—if clear be the word—till the book's last chapter. Professor Cook's theme is that comedy deals with the probable, tragedy with the wonderful; and he develops this in the complex and tormented phraseology of what America calls the New Criticism and with portentous solemnity. Henry James once quoted a friend's verdict on Ruskin's *Mornings in Florence*: "one may read a hundred pages of this sort of thing without dreaming that he is talking about art." One reads page after page by Professor Cook without an inkling that a function of comedy is to amuse. But a reader tempted to drop the book wearily should first turn to the pages in which Professor Cook projects the fierce ray of the psycho-analytical search-light on Lewis Carroll and the two *Alice* books. "Diодорус Сикулус," a famous 'Clerihew' tells us, "Made himself ridiculous, By thinking thimbles, Were phallic symbols." Professor Cook, unaccountably, omits to mention the thimble which Alice found in her pocket and was awarded for winning the Caucus Race. Nevertheless the whole passage is what used to be called a riot, and is, in itself, nearly worth the book's high price.

ALLAN WADE

"*The Idea of the Theater*," by Francis Fergusson. Princeton University Press. \$3.75. London, Cumberlege, 30s.

Mr. Fergusson stirs critical currents which somehow do not settle into clarity. He seeks to define "that dramatic art which in all real plays underlies the more highly evolved arts of language," and discusses varying treatments of the fundamental "myth" in *Oedipus*, *Bérénice*, *Tristan and Isolde* and *Hamlet*. He explores mystical and anthropological origins, is challenging on the relation of the dramatist to society, and on the "ritual" in *Hamlet*, and particularly illuminating on the "analogical relationships" which direct Shakespeare's thought, on the "histrionic sensibility" of Ibsen, and on the dilemma of the modern dramatist, confronting the "divided contemporary consciousness," with no common myth to work upon.

"*The Art of T. S. Eliot*," by Helen Gardner. Cresset Press, 12s. 6d.

Miss Gardner's combination of scholarly integrity and critical perception suggests that in her Mr. Eliot has found the perfect interpreter. Brilliance is too gaudy, and profundity too ponderous a word to describe the quiet, poised lucidity with which she traces developments and unfolds meanings; her manner is a grateful contrast to the assertiveness of much previous criticism. We are given the key to his whole work—"the essential unity of his poetry in spite of change and development arises from the integrity with which he has explored his own vision of life." Fussing over symbols in *The Four Quartets* is quelled by her observation that "the music and meaning arise . . . in the changes and movement of the whole" rather than in any precise interpretation of images. She draws illuminating comparison with *Ulysses* (which might be further developed by the consideration that for both writers "in the beginning was the Word") and she presents synopses of

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Mr. Eliot's plays which are at the same time revelations. "Although Agatha explains she does not explain away" she says of *The Family Reunion*. This is true of her own book.

MARJORIE THOMPSON

ANTIPODES

"*The Australian Theatre*," by Paul McGuire. Cumberlege, 12s. 6d.

The first Fleet sailed from England in May, 1787, Sydney was founded, and Australia heard its first play, Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*, on June 4th, 1789.

Paul McGuire, in a book that is both extremely readable and well documented, traces the theatre in Australia from those humble convict origins to the present day.

No country has a keener theatre audience or one more hungry for live entertainment and yet no country is less well served. The cinema has caused the closing down of the majority of the theatres and Australia depends for her theatrical fare on the most popular plays of visiting celebrities or on her own amateur repertory companies. Any Australian actor of promise, and one thinks of Robert Helpmann, Peter Finch, Cyril Ritchard, soon finds his way to Shaftesbury Avenue or Broadway. The expense of bringing over a company is so great that the entrepreneurs must play for safety.

Whether there is a remedy for this or not, and some form of Australian Arts Council might provide the answer, it is instructive and inspiring to read of the pre-cinema triumphs of the Australian Theatre.

The book is splendidly illustrated and its only shortcoming is the lack of an index.

ARNOLD L. HASKELL

OTHELLO

"*The Moor of Venice*," by Richard Flatter. Heinemann, 15s.

Mr. Flatter follows *Hamlet's Father* with a book which places the

Shakespearean producer and scholar even more deeply in debt to him. *Othello* is of all the "big four" tragedies the one most liable to misrepresentation. Many of the best critics have failed with it. Granville-Barker confessed his own failure by calling it "a tragedy without meaning." The result has been that many productions have turned it from tragedy into melodrama, relying solely on action and letting motive go unsought for. But on this reviewer at least, *Othello*, at first seeing, produced the effect of tragic exaltation in greater measure than any of the others. Mr. Flatter convincingly shows why, and restores the play to its tragic status.

As usual, his conclusions are based on a minute study of the First Folio text, collated with the Quarto. The result is a startling Iago, one who to keep his "purse" Roderigo and to satisfy his actor's instinct, stages the gulling of Othello as a play within the play. Desdemona emerges as a full-blooded woman, the very opposite of the stage's usual palefaced minion, whose love joins with Othello's in the achievement of triumphant immortality. Readers may question some detailed interpretations as far-fetched; but they will be swept by the main argument into a delighted re-discovery of this perfectly wrought masterpiece.

E. MARTIN BROWNE

EDITH CRAIG

"*Edy*," *Recollections of Edith Craig*. Frederick Muller, 10s. 6d.

I knew Edy from the time I started my career in the theatre at the age of nine to the day of her death. She was one of my oldest and dearest friends, and I had the privilege of working for her on very many occasions—as call-boy, A.S.M., stage manager, actress; it is entirely due to her superb training that I am what I am to-day. Now you see my difficulty; knowing her as I did, how can I judge whether

this is a good book or not? I only know that it has brought her alive again for me as I would not have thought it possible for any book to do.

Nearly every contributor has remarked on Edy's inability to suffer fools gladly, her power to transform a few old pieces of sacking and packing cases into a lovely set, and her capacity to make people act: these were all facets of her genius. Her love of children, her kindness, humour, wisdom, patience, made her the great and lovable character she was, and the contributors have brought out these qualities each in his own way.

The poem with which this book starts—"To Edy," from an old neighbour, E. P. Smith—is enchanting. I recommend this book to everyone who loves the theatre, whether they knew Edith Craig or not.

AUDREY CAMERON

LONG PLAYS

"*Daphne Laureola*," by James Bridie. Constable, 4s.

"*French for Love*," by M. Steen and D. Patmore. Falcon Press, 3s. 6d.

"*Rope Enough*," by R. Russell. Deane, 4s.

"*Off the Campden Road*," by Parnell Bradbury, Deane, 4s.

"*For Dear Life*," by Lionel Browne. Deane, 4s.

"*What a Treasure*," by H. Smalley. Deane, 4s.

"*Three-Ply*," by Walter Saltoun. W. and L. Hunt, 4s.

One of Mr. Bridie's most popular plays up to date, *Daphne Laureola* (4 acts, 2 sets, 12 m., 4 f.) depends largely for its success upon the actress who plays "Lady Pitts," the central figure of the play. The plot is very slight and it is the psychological study of the heroine that is all important. By this performance the play stands or falls. The script itself gives ample scope for imaginative production and provides the actors with several

ELLEN TERRY AND EDITH CRAIG
An illustration from "Edy", by kind permission of the publishers



interesting character studies.

French for Love (3 acts, 1 set, 3 m., 4 f.) strikes a much lighter note. The theme of the retired Englishman residing in the south of France and the misunderstandings which arise with his family because of the obvious relationship between his practical French housekeeper, Hortense, and himself, is written with charm and understanding. This is good light entertainment.

The rest of the plays on the list are a very mixed bag, the two most interesting being *Off the Campden Road* (3 acts, 1 set, 3 m., 4 f.) and *Rope Enough* (1 set, 11 m., 3 f., 3 acts). The former, a murder story set in 1904, reminds one of a very famous murder trial but provides one with an unexpected twist in the plot at the end of the play.

Rope Enough, although it has a rather complicated plot, is a thriller set backstage with a strong climax in the last scene. North Wales provides the background of *For Dear Life* (3 acts, 1 set, 4 m., 3 f.) a play about a blind evange-

list and the attempt of a local doctor to restore his sight. The plot appeared pretentious in reading, but it was apparently successful as a broadcast. *What a Treasure* (3 acts, 1 set, 4 m., 5 f.) concerns the search for a hidden treasure which proves worthless and *Three Ply* (3 acts, 1 set, 8 m., 3 f.) is the old type of thriller about a murder and a mistaken identity. These last two plays although lacking in polish and dramatic technique have several interesting situations and I foresee young people having great enjoyment in presenting them.

A. WILLETT-WHITTAKER

"STAGECRAFT"

by Hal D. Stewart. Pitman, 25s.

This book can be wholeheartedly recommended. Mr. Hal Stewart is, of course, a very experienced man of the theatre and he has written an excellent book that deals in a thorough way with presentation from the stage director's point of view. This side of stage work is still often neglected in the amateur theatre world. But although Mr. Stewart has the amateur very much in mind, as is shown by his many references, he seems in the main to be writing for groups that play in sizeable theatres with well equipped stages. I hope this will not have the effect of overwhelming people who are normally obliged to work in an all-purpose hall with a very inadequate stage, and discourage them from acquiring the book. The care and attention to detail and thoroughness which is the main theme of the book is equally important in these cases although the organisation and method of achievement may sometimes be different. There are full chapters on Design, Scenery-making, Lighting and Effects, and an excellent chapter on stage management proper with an illuminating and detailed account of the handling of a *Twelfth Night* production. The book is very fully illustrated, has an intro-

duction by Mr. Norman Marshall, and is completed with a Glossary of Stage Terms and a list of suppliers. There is, however, no bibliography, which is a pity, as within the scope of one volume Mr. Stewart is not able to deal so comprehensively with all aspects of stagecraft. Such things as Effects and Curtain Settings, with which the late Mr. Frank Napier dealt in his two books, could best be covered by a bibliography.

FRANK NEWMAN

"A LIFE OF CHEKHOV"

by Irene Nemirovsky, translated by Erik de Maury. Grey Walls Press, 12s. 6d.

This is a book of rare beauty. The authoress was a Russian-born novelist who won fame in France before she was arrested and deported to meet an unknown fate during the War. Her Slav blood and her great gifts as a writer combine to enable the reader not only to understand but also to love the genius whose quality her work reflects. No one who wishes to produce a Chekhov play should miss this book. It softens none of the deep misery of Russian life from which his "melancholy" sprang, and yet irradiates it with the joy that only the great artist can infuse into the creation of human character. A brave, compassionate and very human figure remains in the heart and mind as one reluctantly closes the book.

E. MARTIN BROWNE.

SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

Those who cannot be present at the AMATEUR THEATRE WEEK at Bournemouth at Whitsuntide may like to know that copies of the forty-page Souvenir Programme, which is profusely illustrated, can be obtained for 2s. 6d. post free from the Secretary, B.D.L. The full details given provide a vivid picture of the proceedings.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mr. Christie wrote to us about "The Essentials of Stage Planning," which Frederick Muller published for the League. Mr. Southern replies for the three authors.

Sir,

I have just read *The Essentials of Stage Planning*, which you reviewed. If this book aims at being a guide to architects, it is a menace. It seems to date back to the past. What the architect does not know—as the book admits—is the technical work of stage design. It is not his affair. Some modern equipment is much better and cheaper than the old, but it is not mentioned. The architect will find little of modern technique in this book. You might just as well write a book for motor manufacturers describing the old Benz cars. The chief matters to be settled beforehand by the employers in Theatre building—which must then be communicated to the architect before he starts—are sliding stage, cyclorama and lighting, but the authors show no knowledge of these subjects. The antiquated rotating stage is discussed, the sliding stage is not mentioned; the combination of solid and cloth cyclorama is not mentioned (nor the reason for it); lighting bridges and their accurate positions are omitted; so are projection of scenery and cloud and mist machines; so are the dimming apparatus, black cyclorama, "boomerangs," and the design and the movement of curtains. The details of the seating are overlooked. The would-be builders are not told how to make their over-head mechanism nor how to ventilate their buildings. The new owners are not told where they can see the new methods at work and where they would be welcomed. This is poor advice to the architects or to others who are interested in these matters as a hobby. In details the book is misleading. We want to hear no more of the old-

fashioned floors. We want modern methods. The book does not suggest how lighting batteries can remain alight until they come down to stage level, nor where the counterweights (of the overhead mechanisms) are to be kept. Theatres may have to be used as opera houses. We are unlikely to have opera houses in every town, but there are no details nor advice about orchestra pits in this book. This book does not encourage its readers to get on. This country in these matters is far behind the Continent. We should wake up and get in front.

Yours,
Glyndebourne. JOHN CHRISTIE

Sir,

In the first place Mr. Christie entirely disregards the distinctions between a playhouse and an opera house. He even falls into the "dual-purpose" trap which is possibly more damaging than anything else to modern theatre planning, and actually allows among his ideal expressions the very uncourageous compromise: "Theatres may have to be used as opera house." A playhouse is and always was unsuitable for an opera house and vice-versa. Heaven forbid that we should recommend architects to build playhouses in such a way as to be all adaptable to opera-houses—when they would be properly fitted to neither! Let us build proper playhouses and proper opera houses, *but not mix them*. Our book was about playhouses *not* opera houses otherwise it would certainly have contained a reference to Glyndebourne.

In the second place our book was primarily about stage planning and not about stage equipment. All the desiderata mentioned in his criticism are items of equipment—and only some of them suitable for playhouses (of the running of which Mr. Christie has

still to show in his writings that he has any experience). In spite of the avowed limitation of our subject, we dealt with equipment where it influenced planning. We are accused of discussing "the antiquated rotating stage"—though we did so with severe and reasoned objections against it, not with general recommendation. We "show no knowledge of" cycloramas, yet we spend seven close-packed pages on their history, forms, advantages and disadvantages!

In the last place, let me take up one point and gladly repair an omission in the book. The point is in Mr. Christie's "New owners are not told where they can see the new methods at work and where they would be welcome." I know very well, and will say, where one such place is: it is Glyndebourne. I know the welcome will be most warm, the trip ideally delightful and the stage one of the finest examples in England of the equipment of an *opera* stage. I know also that if the visitor turns to the auditorium and seeks Mr. Christie's opinion on the problem of the architectural relation of an auditorium to a stage, Mr. Christie may answer—as he did to me when I paid this visit—"I am not interested in that."

Yours very truly,
RICHARD SOUTHERN

Hampton Hill.

"FESTIVAL WITH A DIFFERENCE"

Sir,

Miss Dorothy Carr, in "Festival with a Difference," paints a pretty pastel picture of the Durham County Non-competitive Festival, with one or two side-kicks at the competitive festival.

I would like to congratulate Miss Carr on the post-festival school. This is an excellent idea. I would like to hear more of the response, by way of attendance, from the teams concerned, and of the finances of these functions

in relation to the Festival as a whole. For the rest, I see very little "difference."

There has been much opposition of recent years to the competitive festival. I think it is a grand institution. I like its atmosphere, its mounting excitement and its competitive spirit—yes, even when it leads to imprecations and maledictions in the "local" after the show. I believe it to be a healthy and necessary purge in the amateur movement. It has its attendant evils, and could do with a spot of reform. (One such reform should be, I think, to abolish the marking system, except as a private guide to adjudicators.) But the relation between the "non" and the "com" is that of dill water to beer.

Yours truly,
Birmingham. GWYN THOMAS.

Sir,

The Spring number of DRAMA affords striking evidence that the methods of adjudicating at public drama festivals require to be radically revised. The main fault is in the marking system. It does not assist the adjudicator to weigh the evidence from the performance in a reasonable and just manner.

Drama ability can be measured by modern psychometric methods. The Ulster Drama League has been experimenting with Scientific Marking Sheets for over a year, to obtain an objective evaluation of the actual performance. Each actor, producer and stage manager, and the choice of play is marked for each act separately, and the average taken. The range of marks should be from thirty to ninety, with a mean of sixty and standard deviation ten. Production, Acting Presentation, Play, should be weighted in the ratio of 4 : 3 : 2 : 1. The response of the audience in each act should be assessed out of ten marks and the average taken.

There is a technique of measuring ability, just as there is a technique of acting; and it should not interfere with the art.

The ancient Greeks did not know the technique of measuring. They could not arrange, in order of merit, three poets each presenting in one day three tragedies and one Satyric comedy, though there were ten judges: for, when Sophocles presented his *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the prize was given to a third-rate poet called Philocles.

Yours faithfully,
Belfast. D. A. NIEL McKEOWN.

"AUDIENCE FIRST"

Sir,

I was very interested in the article entitled "Audience First," because from my experience with one amateur, and one provincial Repertory Company, I have gained the impression that the stage exists for the glorification of individuals only. One actor of long experience confessed that the urge which impelled a person to act was exhibitionism. I also discovered to my bitter cost that actors and actresses do not welcome adverse criticism, however much they pretend to do so. Praise them and they smile on you; criticise them, and your reward is black looks.

I would like to see all Schools of Dramatic Art make their first lesson the dependence of the actor on the public. Plays are written for the benefit of the public; the actor's duty is to interpret the play, as it is intended to be, to the audience.

A final comment on plays: I am old-fashioned enough to believe that a play (or film) should send the audience home with a feeling of mental uplift, or spiritual satisfaction, and this is only created by the victory of right over wrong, or the good old happy ending. There is too much blood, sand and fornication in our modern plays. Playwrights seem too intent on showing people how *not* to live their lives.

Yours faithfully,
Hereford. FRED V. D. BERRY.

SOCIETIES TO JOIN

Our note in DRAMA brought replies from the following: all want men, those starred want women also:

*Unity Theatre
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The Buckingham Players
Mrs. A. Wilkins, 11 Willow Road, Hampstead, N.W.3.

Red Triangle Society
Y.M.C.A., Greengate Street, Plaistow, E.

*Priory Players (Ealing)
Hon. Sec., 24 Barnfield Road, W.5.

*Festival Players (Blackheath)
Miss E. M. Burgess, 69 Old Dover Road, S.E.3.

*Entens
Miss Betty Corbridge, 9 Lansdowne Road, N.10 (backstage helpers also welcome).

The Secretary, B.D.L., would also be glad to hear from any societies willing to give performances to other organisations, and from organisations desiring to receive such visits.

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Mr. G. Trevor-Johnstone, Divisional Sales Manager, has resigned. Mr. E. M. Gamble has been appointed Sales Superintendent, effective immediately.

PLAY COMPETITION FOR 1951

"The Amateur Stage" are running a competition for full-length plays for the Festival of Britain: closing date, July 31, 1950. For details write to the Editor, 356/8 Kilburn High Road, N.W.6.

A CORRECTION :

We apologise to Miss Rose Bruford, who was wrongly represented in the 1949 Conference Minutes as speaking in favour of competitive festivals.

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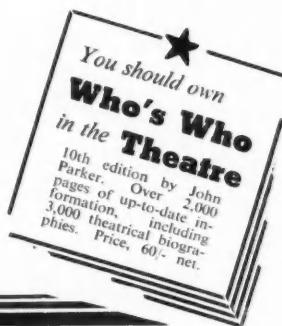
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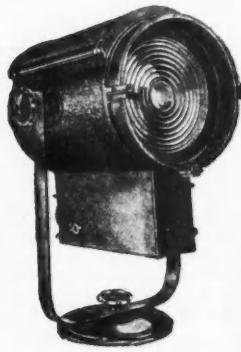
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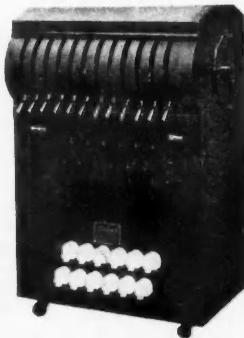
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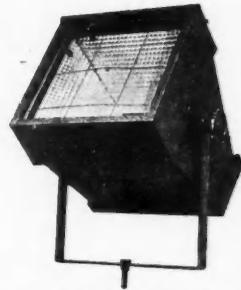
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